

School Programs Commodity Update

What's New in the Food Distribution Program for Schools

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The Electronic Commodity Ordering System

Implementation of the Electronic Commodity Ordering System (ECOS) to State Agencies has begun! All State agencies are now able to electronically transmit commodity orders directly into a centralized web-based USDA food ordering computer system. It is designed and developed to assist States in reducing the time required to perform day-to-day ordering activities related to the USDA commodity program. The system also facilitates timely communications between States and USDA.

State agencies can also use ECOS to allow schools to electronically submit commodity requests to them. However, State agencies are encouraged to keep ECOS at the State level at least until SY 2005, to become proficient with its use and to determine whether and how to roll ECOS to the school level.

We have made many improvements to ECOS based upon feedback from the pilot test states and local agencies, and we will continue to make improvements. We are committed to excellent customer service and welcome any feedback you may have to improve the system or food ordering operations.

We will provide technical assistance to customers through both a dedicated email address and a telephone hotline, which will be staffed by specialists.



Review of Group B Specifications

We have nearly completed the review of commodity Group B specifications. Group B products include grains, cheese, peanut,

and oil products. This review is part of a USDA initiative to better meet the needs of schools, and to bring our commodities more in line, where possible, with their commercial counterparts.

USDA solicited comments on these specifications from schools, manufacturers, and other commodity customers and stakeholders. These comments are being considered as part of this review. We will be posting the results of our review in late spring on our Food Distribution web site at fns.usda.gov/fdd

Percentage of Commodities Provided by Food Group

The Food Guide Pyramid was developed by USDA to help healthy Americans use the Dietary Guidelines for Americans to choose foods for a healthy diet. This pyramid now appears widely in articles, food packaging, and advertising designed to show the composition of a healthy diet and the contribution of specific food products to such diets.

The Food Guide Pyramid is a graphic tool that conveys “at a glance” the concept of variety. A variety of foods from each food group is necessary to get the nutrients needed. The pyramid divides food into five major food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meat and it is a guide for daily food choices. The small tip of the pyramid shows fats and sweets.

Fats and Sweets	Use sparingly
Meat group	2-3 servings
Dairy group	2-3 servings
Fruit group	2-4 servings
Vegetable group	3-5 servings
Grains group	6-11 servings

The table below reflects the percent of total pounds of commodities by food group USDA provided to schools in SY 2002. The data includes both entitlement and bonus commodities. A total of 1,147,564,004 pounds were provided to schools.

Food Group	Pounds
Fats	3%
Dairy	10%
Grains	11%
Meat/Poultry/Fish	36%
Fruits/Vegetables	40%
Total	100



Browse New Items on FDP’s Web Site

The Food Distribution Programs’ web site continues to grow. If you access the USDA FNS web site at www.fns.usda.gov/fns and click on Food Distribution you will find:

- The 2002 Commodity Acceptability Progress (CAP) Reports for NSLP.
- The revised version of the History of Food Distribution Programs.
- The 2003-4 Foods Available List for Schools and Institutions.

Comments

If you have any questions or comments on our products or service, we have an Internet address specifically for this purpose: ***fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov***, or you can write to Food Distribution Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 520, Alexandria, VA 22302.

Acronym List

ECOS	Electronic Commodity Ordering System
FDD	Food Distribution Division
FDP	Food Distribution Programs
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
SY	School Year
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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